



Wisconsin State Senator  
**PAM GALLOWAY**

Senate District 29

**Testimony on Senate Bill 514**  
**Senate Committee on Judiciary, Utilities, Commerce, and**  
**Government Operations**  
**March 1, 2012**

Chairman Zipperer and members of the committee, thank you for taking the time to hear Senate Bill 514 today.

Senate Bill 514 eliminates the accrual of sick leave credits for members of the Wisconsin Legislature. The effective date is actually built into the statutes. The new provision applies to legislators for terms of office that begin after the bills effective date, which would mean January of 2013. Current accumulated sick leave balances would not be affected by this legislation.

As a newly elected lawmaker, I was surprised to learn that unused accumulated sick leave credits can be converted to pay premiums for post-retirement health insurance. I feel that this is an unnecessary perk for lawmakers especially given that we are eligible to convert these credits immediately upon retirement regardless of the number of years served.

With our current fiscal situation, decisions need to be made to do what's right for the State of Wisconsin. I reached out to Legislative Human Resources to run some numbers. It is estimated that eliminating this will save taxpayers \$80,000 annually. Another scenario I asked for was the cash value of a 25 year lawmaker (who never touched their sick leave) upon retirement. The amount that this 25-year veteran could convert to health insurance is estimated to be just over \$83,000. I'm not sure how many taxpayers know that they've been funding this for lawmakers.

While some may argue that this may have been a nice benefit during more prosperous times, it's fiscally irresponsible to continue providing this. I'm willing to do my part, and I'd ask you to join me.

I want to thank all of you for your time and consideration. My thanks again to the Chairman for holding this hearing. I am happy to take any questions you might have.



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# HOWARD MARKLEIN

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 51<sup>ST</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

March 1, 2012

Thank you, Chairman Zipperer and the rest of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Utilities, Commerce, and Government operations for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 514, regarding the elimination of sick leave for state senators and representatives to the Wisconsin State Legislature.

As state legislators, we have no set hours and are technically on duty around the clock. When we cannot show up for session or a committee meeting, we ask for a leave of absence from our obligation. Very few legislators actually contact Human Resources or the Chief Clerk to take sick hours for their absence.

Currently, elected officials accumulate sick leave that has no value until it is converted into a health insurance benefit at retirement. Sick leave remains largely unused by state legislators until it becomes a retirement benefit. Many state legislators are unaware that they receive sick leave, which contributes to its low usage.

The elimination of sick leave would only apply to state representatives and state senators in the legislature. The bill does not affect any sick leave accrued by a state senator or state representative during a term of office before the bill's effective date. According to state statute, the effective date of this legislation would be January 7, 2013, when legislators are inaugurated for the next session.

According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the current estimated value of accumulated sick leave of 132 state legislators is \$2,888,800. According to the same memo, there would be a savings of \$79,100 in GPR funds per year with the elimination of legislator sick leave.

During a time of financial hardship for our state, it is our duty as elected officials to be examples when it comes to scaling back on unnecessary spending. This is a benefit that we are privileged to receive, but do not need.

Thank you.